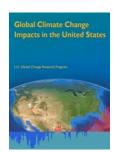


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Today, the White House helped to launch a new science report representing a consensus of 13 agencies developed over a year and half and focused on potential climate change impacts on the United States.

- · Read the report [UPDATE: The event has now concluded.]
- · View the powerpoint presentation

It's the most comprehensive report to date on the possible impacts of climate change for everyone across America, and begins an important process of redefining the sort of information we need in order to deal with climate change at national and regional scales. Effectively managing our response to a changing climate falls into two general categories:



- Implementing measures to limit climate change and therefore avoid many of the impacts
 discussed in the report. These measures must reduce the amount of greenhouse gases in the
 atmosphere and might include increasing our reliance on clean energy, and developing energy
 efficient technologies
- Reducing our vulnerability and increasing our resilience to ongoing climate change in pro-active, community-based ways. Examples of this include such measures as developing more climate-sensitive building codes to keep people out of harm's way, or planting more drought or heat tolerant crops, for example.

As a first step in reducing the impact of climate change, we need to know what impacts we must avoid in the future, and this report, "Global Climate Change Impacts in the United States", does just that-outlining the possible direction of climate change under two broad scenarios: the first if we reduce greenhouse gas emissions aggressively, and the second, if we are less aggressive. These are neither the highest or lowest possible scenarios but begin to compare the possible futures for the U.S.

An important element of this new report, apart from that it is deliberately written in plain language so we can all read and understand the science in it, is that it dives down in the various regions of the U.S. and provides much more regional detail about possible impacts than ever before – critical information for an effective response. It also breaks down the potential climate change impacts by economic and social sectors, most of which transcend regional boundaries, such as water, energy, health, transportation, and agriculture – all vital components of a healthy and stable society.

The report notes climate change impacts that we are already seeing across the U.S. as well as those that will soon emerge or become more intense if action is slow to occur. Some of the impacts that the report mentions are:

· More rain is already coming in very heavy events, and this is





projected to increase across the nation. This would have impacts on transportation, agriculture, water quality, health, and more;



- Heat waves will become more frequent and intense, increasing threats to human health and quality of life, especially in cities;
- Warming will decrease demand for heating energy in winter and increase demand for cooling energy in summer. The latter will increase peak electricity demand in most regions;
- Water resources will be stressed in many regions. For example, snowpack is declining in the West, and there is an increasing probability of drought in the Southwest, while floods and water quality issues are likely to be more of a problem in most regions;
- In coastal communities, sea-level rise and storm surge will increase threats to homes and infrastructure including water, sewer, transportation and communication systems.

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Gulf Coast Area Roads at Risk from Sea-Level Rise



CCSP SAP 4.7217

Within 50 to 100 years, 2,400 miles of major roadway are projected to be inundated by sea-level rise in the Gulf Coast region. The map shows roadways at risk in the event of a sea-level rise of about 4 feet, within the range of projections for this region in this century under medium- and high-emissions scenarios. In total, 24 percent of interstate highway miles and 28 percent of secondary road miles in the Gulf Coast region are at elevations below 4 feet. In

Through identifying the climate change impacts we are experiencing now, as well as those that are emerging faster than we thought, and those projected to increase in the future, the report clearly highlights the choices we face regarding possible response options to reduce the impacts of climate change across the United States.

Responses to climate change impacts in the United States will almost certainly evolve over time as we learn through experience. Determining and refining the responses will involve partnerships between scientists, policymakers, the public, private industry, communities, and decision-makers at all levels. Implementing these response strategies will require careful planning and continual feedback on the impacts of policies for government, industry, and society.

More of the report's findings are located at http://www.globalchange.gov, which is the new home of the U.S. Global Change Research Program, the interagency Government program that commissioned the report. The report was led by NOAA.

Dr. Anne Waple is with the US Global Change Research Program

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